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AUTHOR Williams, Vernon
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ABSTRACT

The paper describes an experimental program for college freshmen which applies Piaget's theory of human development to students' academic and social experiences. The program, Accenting Development of Abstract Processes of Thought (ADAPT), was designed to facilitate movement of students from concrete operational thought patterns to more formal thought patterns. It incorporated three elements which are critical to basic theories of development: concrete exploration by students, application beyond the classroom, and peer interaction. ADAPT was used in six content areas: English, history, economics, physics, anthropology, and mathematics. The courses began with concrete exploration activities and moved gradually toward more abstract formulations. For example, anthropology classes observed and recorded people's communication through positions of eyebrows, lips, arms, and legs, in order to prepare for study of research findings about body language in various cultures. Another aspect of the ADAPT program addressed the emotional/ethical side of students' experiences. In an initial exercise, students wrote descriptions of learning experiences they had encountered outside the formal educational setting and identified experiential elements that had facilitated their learning. After sharing these experiences within small groups, students were ready to apply the concepts to academic work. It is pointed out that integrated programs of student development must support academic program goals. (Author/AV)

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The Emotional and Ethical Development of College Students

With Acknowledgement to Piaget and Other Theorists

Vernon Williams

University of Nebraska

Human service professionals in higher education have yet to realize much of the potential of their roles. While many factors may hinder realization of this potential, one major barrier has consisted in the isolation of these professionals from the main life of the institution, the academic enterprise. The view of students' personal development held by student personnel professionals cannot be implemented because it remains outside the mainstream. Without the cooperation of the academic disciplines, developmental professionals cannot hope to affect students' lives broadly.

Piaget's theory promises to bridge the gap between human service professionals and academics. The emphases in Piaget on the role of peer interaction in the assimilation-accommodation process, the emotional dynamics of the developmental process, the personal perceptions of the individual, and other emotional and ethical elements within a general framework emphasizing intellectual development offer a vehicle for integrating the two developmental strands and legitimizing the emotional-ethical aspect. Although Piaget's conceptualization of human development (1972) has been thought to have limited applicability to late adolescence, data are

accumulating to suggest that the theory is applicable in that age range (Lawson & Renner, 1974; Tomlinson-Keasey, 1972; Wason, 1968; Moshman, 1977). While Piaget's theory is not unique in this respect, it includes emotional and ethical implications, in addition to its main emphasis, intellectual development. William Perry's theory is helpful in extending Piaget's at the higher levels of emotional and chronological development. Perry discusses emotional commitment and openness to new experience in addition to the intellectual aspects of students' progress through their late adolescent years. And, of course, Kohlberg (1970, 1975) has built upon Piaget and extended his work to the moral realm.

Description

The application to be described here of Piaget's ideas occurs in the context of a special experimental University program called "ADAPT" (Accenting Development of Abstract Processes of Thought). The heart of the ADAPT Program is a curriculum for college freshmen which emanates from Piagetian Theory. This curriculum is designed to facilitate movement of students from concrete operational thought patterns to more formal thought patterns. In each of the six content areas--English, History, Economics, Physics, Anthropology, and Mathematics--courses have been devised which begin with concrete exploration activities and move gradually toward more abstract formulations.

The actual courses in the ADAPT curriculum all begin with the students observing behavior and collecting data. For example, some of the functional relationships in Economics have been explored by having students receive yearly incomes in play dollars. They then allocate these dollars to various expenses, investments, etc. Looking at the relationship between the way that they have allocated money and the way various families and individuals in the society allocate money is a third step. In anthropology the communi-

cations through facial and body expression have been observed and recorded through positions of eyebrows, lips, arms, and legs. Following this kind of exploration activity, students are prepared to deal with some of the research findings in anthropology about body language. The data gathered are organized and used (a) to form hypotheses, (b) to introduce concepts important to the field, and (c) to provide a basis for generalization to other topics.

The ADAPT Program, as an application of some of Piaget's ideas, could not ignore the emotional and ethical realms. Indeed, far from trying to avoid these areas, ADAPT from the beginning addressed itself to the emotional side of the student's experience.

Other efforts to facilitate more than intellectual development in college students have shared some elements with the approach described here and differed from it in some ways. Clyde Parker and his students have sought to enhance development using Perry's scheme. (Widick, Knepelkamp, & Parker, 1975; Knepelkamp & Slepitz, 1976; Widick, 1975). Their emphasis seems primarily to be on challenging students by raising questions and organizing experiential learning opportunities and on supporting them by providing clear structure and a close personal environment. The approach used at the secondary level by several Minnesotans and their colleagues and students (Bernier & Rustad, 1977; Cognetta, 1977; Erickson, 1977; Sprinthall, 1977) have focused on active empathy, the action/reflection, seminar/practicum pattern of Mosher & Sprinthall (1971), responsible social role-taking, teaching with the Flanders Interaction Categories, asking "Piagetian-type" questions, and other related techniques. Rest (1977) has pointed out that theory is related to practice in this area only in the broadest sense.

In light of Rest's assessment of the field, all new approaches should be welcomed and subjected to empirical trial. It is in this spirit that the approach to students' emotional development in the ADAPT Program is described here. This approach is to be viewed as the beginning stage in a program that, despite its accomplishments, still has far to go.

The general approach to student ethical-emotional development took the same form as was used for intellectual development in the academic courses. Some activity was planned initially to involve students in exploration of the topics to be pursued, then questions were posed and ideas were offered to challenge and aid students to organize and draw inferences from their exploration. Students were encouraged to apply what they had learned in an exercise.

The first exercise undertaken in the second year of the program will illustrate the process just described. Students were asked first to write a description of a learning experience they had encountered outside the formal educational setting and to identify experiential elements that had facilitated their learning. Students shared their perceptions of the learning facilitative elements with other members of small groups. Application to academic work was encouraged with the expectation that further exploration would take place later in the year.

In all exercises at least three elements were present: 1) active, concrete student exploration, 2) application beyond the classroom, and 3) peer interaction. In the first year the time for developmental exploration was relatively unstructured. The second year program was more highly structured, using the exercise listed in the third column in the table in an effort to accomplish the goals listed in columns one and two. Column one contains general (intellectual) program objectives. Column

two objectives were formulated both to support the objectives in column one and to stand as legitimate personal development goals in themselves.

The Integrated Approach

The approach involves integration of emotional with academic development in the context of a complete educational program. Although a large portion of the approach is idiosyncratic to the initiative and personality of the individual primarily concerned with students' personal-emotional development, some general principles can be asserted.

1. The academic program must be chosen based on a theory which promises development of the whole student within an intellectual framework.

While ADAPT certainly was not established mainly for the purpose, several aspects of the program (not least its theoretical base) make it a hospitable environment for personal development. Among those aspects are the facts that students participate in the entire program together, the program dictates interaction among students for academic reasons, and faculty are generally concerned with students' lives outside the classroom.

2. The student development effort must support the academic program goals.

As can be seen in table one, the goals of facilitating student interaction, enhancing logical thought, and establishing student-faculty relationships, as well as others, lend themselves to support from student development professionals.

3. At least some aspects of the effort to help students develop personally and emotionally can best be taught in a rather straightforward fashion. Elements of self-development, taught in a classroom setting are outlined in the table.

Some readers undoubtedly will object that these principles are not

(Place Table 1 about here.)

empirically based and, in fact, are rather arbitrarily drawn.. In response I would submit that these principles apply to the approach I am describing here. Others may derive different principles. I believe that the current state of the art calls for a variety of different sets of principles. These several sets can then be tried so that differences in consequences, if any, can be observed.

Some facets of this personal-emotional development effort do not lend themselves to the formation of principles. The sooner we learn to accept both artistic and scientific sides of the application to developmental theory, the sooner we shall learn to use the two parts effectively.

Involved in program planning from the beginning, the applied developmentalist was available for consultation with individual students, those referred by faculty as well as those coming on their own initiative. He also visited classrooms and consulted with faculty about his observations. He consulted with faculty also concerning a group of students unable or unwilling to participate fully in the classes, ultimately organizing a group for them within the anthropology class.

Conclusions

Several things were learned from these efforts. The next (third) version of the ADAPT Program will reveal whether or not this learning can be applied effectively. The hypotheses to be explored in the next trial of ADAPT may be stated here.

1. Students resisted participating in structured, self-initiated exploration in career areas, yet when they organized their exploration as they wished, they remained highly anxious about career plans. The hypothesis to be explored next is that if students commit themselves in advance to specified exploratory activities, they will gain more confidence in career choices than occurred this year.

2. Students felt that they gained little from group dynamics experiences and that, while transactional analysis exercises were fun, they seemed not to lead anywhere. An effort will be made to explore these facets of personal learning directly in the context of the program's academic courses.

3. Students in the second version of the program appeared to recognize virtually no need to develop their personal approaches to learning. The limited attempt in this direction the first year proved the most highly effective of any developmental endeavor. The next trial will consist of an effort to personalize what students can most profitably learn about individual learning styles.

The general conclusions one may draw from student development efforts in ADAPT are potentially manifold. Three seem most important. First, the value of working within a developmental theory can hardly be overemphasized. When inevitably one's endeavor is not as successful as it might be, the theory provides guidance concerning modifications in approach.

Second, basing a decision to introduce new elements into one's approach to student development on an empirical evaluation of one's efforts seems exceedingly fruitful. While the present evaluation was empirical only in a very broad sense (as distinguished from the narrower one practiced by most present-day social science), observation, student reaction and even some "data collection" played a part in the conclusions drawn. An even more helpful evaluation can be based explicitly on the developmental program's objectives (as was done here in a loose sense).

Finally, the integration of the emotional-ethical development effort with that of the intellectual-academic was of inestimable worth. It seemed to this observer that his participation permitted incomparably closer rela-

tionships with students than does the traditional role of a counselor in higher education, and with few of the disadvantages often thought to be associated with the more integrated role.

Future theoretical development can profitably focus on the question of whether differences among Piagetian, Kohlbergian, and Perryian formulations can be reflected in outcomes of developmental programs using each of the three theoretical approaches. Employing outcome measures in the areas of ethical/moral and personal, as well as intellectual development should enable investigators to determine more accurately whether the different theoretical emphases result in different patterns of student response.

Table 1. Program Objectives and Exercises

Intellectual Objective	Personal Development Objective	Exercise
1. Logical thinking	Applying logic in personal life	Describing and analyzing a non-school learning experience
2. Learning how to learn	Becoming sensitive to ways one learns best	Abstracting from a learning experience in the student's personal life ways the student learned
3. Learning to interact effectively with fellow students and faculty in joint educational ventures	Enhancing interpersonal effectiveness via group dynamics	Participating in a group project and attempting to apply group dynamics principles to it
4. Gaining self-confidence to increase openness	Developing self-esteem	Participating in several exercises designed to teach transactional analysis
5. Preparing self for future learning	Developing independence in learning	Exploring classes taught in traditional fashion

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